BRITISH COLUMBIA

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

The 1996 Census

- **The British remain the largest single ethnic group in British Columbia, according to the latest Census results.** In 1996, nearly 793,000 residents (22% of the population) indicated that their ancestry was in the British Isles.

  About two-thirds (64%) of British Columbians indicated a single ethnic or cultural group to which their ancestors belonged. Among these people, the largest group was British (22%), followed by Asians (15%), and those of other European (13%) ancestry. For the first time ever, Canadian was listed as one of the choices on the census, and 10% of British Columbians claimed this as their ethnic origin. The remainder were Aboriginals (2%) or from other ethnic groups (2%). *Source: 1996 Census of Canada*

- **At the national level, Canadian (19%) and British (17%) were the most commonly named single ethnic origins.** Ten percent reported French-only ancestry. Among the provinces, Canadian ethnicity was most frequently cited in Quebec (38%) and New Brunswick (24%). Manitoba (9%) and BC (10%) were the provinces where Canadian was the least likely to be cited. *Source: 1996 Census of Canada*

- **Nearly 18% of British Columbians identified themselves as belonging to visible minorities in 1996.** The predominant groups were Chinese (299,860) and South Asians (158,430). Another 141,390 British Columbians reported other Asian ancestry. Nationally, 11% of Canadians identified themselves as belonging to a visible minority, with rates ranging from 1% in Newfoundland and PEI to 18% in BC. *Source: 1996 Census of Canada*

Retail and Wholesale Sales

- **BC retailers increased their sales by 4.9% in 1997.** This was an improvement over 1996, when sales rose only 1.3%, but was lower than some of the strong gains observed earlier in the decade. Canadian sales posted their strongest gain (+7.3%) since 1988. In other provinces, sales growth ranged from 2.5% in New Brunswick to 12.8% in Alberta. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Drug stores led other BC retailers in terms of growth last year, with sales increasing 7.2%.** General merchandise (e.g. department store) sales were up 6.7% and furniture (5.5%) and clothing (5.4%) retailers also outperformed the provincial average. Sales by automotive retailers (dealers, service stations and auto parts and repair stores) rose 4.4% in 1997, indicating that the boom in new vehicle sales last year was offset by lower sales of recreational and used vehicles, and less spending on other dealer services such as auto repairs. Nationally, the strongest growth was in sales by furniture (+9.8%) and automotive (+9.4%) retailers. General merchandise stores (+9.3%) also outperformed the national average. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Sales by wholesalers in the province increased 6.0% during 1997.** Canadian wholesale sales rose 13.1%, boosted by strong growth in Ontario (+14.9%) and surging sales in Saskatchewan (+26.3%), Alberta (+25.7%) and Manitoba (+22.1%). Sales rose more moderately in the rest of the country, with PEI (+1.6%) showing the lowest growth. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Exports

- **Exports of BC products increased 3.2% during 1997.** Although the increase was below the national average (+7.6%), BC regained

Report — Migration and Housing Demand

Did you know...?
Canada's pig herd has been growing steadily since 1991. There were 12.2 million hogs in Canada at the beginning of January, 134,000 more than a year earlier. BC's hog population was 195,000–a tenth the size of Alberta's.

much of the ground lost during 1996, when exports fell 4.3%. The deterioration in the value of the Canadian dollar helped boost the value of exports, as prices for a number of BC products sold internationally are quoted in US dollars.

Forest product exports fell 2.2% in 1997, declining for the second straight year. However, exports of automotive products (+20.8%), consumer goods (+19.0%) and machinery and equipment (+16.3%) were up sharply, increasing enough to offset the effect of lower sales by the forest products sector.

BC lagged behind most of the other provinces in its export growth. Nova Scotia (0.8%), New Brunswick (0.8%) and the north (2.5%) were the only regions where exports increased less than in BC. In the rest of the country, export growth ranged from 5.1% in Alberta to 19.9% in PEI. Ontario's exports were 9.7% higher than in 1996.

Source: Statistics Canada

Manufacturing shipments

- **The value of shipments of goods manufactured in the province increased 2.1% in 1997.** The improvement in shipments was largely due to a rebound in the wood industry (+3.8%), combined with strong growth in shipments by manufacturers of other durable goods. Durable goods, which account for about 56% of all shipments, were up 5.3%. Machinery and equipment (18.3%) and electrical and electronic equipment (+13.6%) manufacturers posted particularly strong gains. However, shipments by non-durable goods manufacturers were down 1.8%, mainly as a result of declines in the paper (-6.9%) and food (-3.6%) industries.

  Nationally, shipments rose 6.9% during 1997, with all but two provinces–Newfoundland (-3.9%) and New Brunswick (-1.7%)–showing increases. The three prairie provinces led the nation, with growth rates ranging from 11.5% in Manitoba to 15.4% in Saskatchewan. Ontario's shipments increased 5.0% last year. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Prison Population

- **On an average day in 1996/97, there were 1,961 inmates in BC who had been sentenced to a period of custody in a provincial institution.** This was 1.5% more than in the previous year. Nationally, there were an average of 14,031 inmates in provincial institutes and 14,143 inmates in federal prisons.

  Source: SC, Juristat Vol 18, No 3

- **Suicide is the most common cause of death among prison inmates.** In 1996/97, there were 92 inmate deaths in Canadian provincial/territorial correctional institutions, and 48 in federal penitentiaries. Twenty-seven deaths in provincial insitutions and 10 deaths in federal prisons were suicides. The inmate suicide rate was 4.0 per 10,000 adults, compared to 1.7 in the general population. Five murders were recorded in Canadian prisons during 1996/97, four of them in federal institutions.

  Source: SC, Juristat Vol 18, No 3

- **There were 58 escapes from federal prisons in 1996/97, down from 59 in the previous year.** This was the lowest number in recent years. Between 1992 and 1994, the number of prison escapes averaged 205 annually. Most of them were from minimum security institutions. Provincial institutions lost 1,220 prisoners, more than half of whom were individuals who failed to report to serve an intermittent sentence.

  Source: SC, Juristat Vol 18, No 3

Reproductive Cancer Among Women

- **Reproductive cancers accounted for a tenth of all female cancer deaths in BC during 1996.** By far the most common was ovarian cancer (59%), followed by uterine (21%) and cervical (14%) cancer. Cancer death rates in BC were below the national average for ovarian (4.8 per 100,000 women, compared to 8.8 nationally) and uterine (4.1, compared to 4.3) cancer, but higher than average for cervical cancer (3.0 in BC and 2.7 in Canada). *Source: Vital Statistics Quarterly Digest*

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

Infoline Report:

February 20, 1998

Migration and Housing Demand

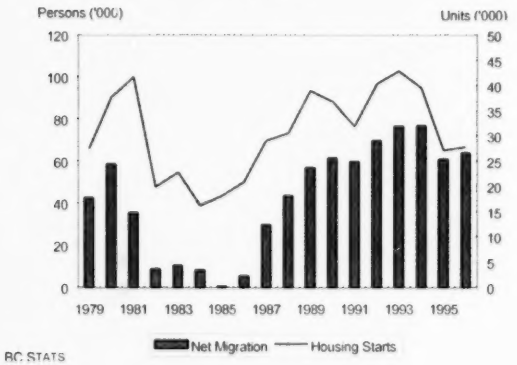
Originally published in 3rd Quarter 1997 issue of *Migration Highlights*. An annual subscription is $30 + GST

Summary

The demand for housing is influenced by a number of factors that are both demographic and economic in nature. On the demographic side, population migration, the changing age structure of the population and the composition of households will influence the demand for housing. Economic factors such as housing prices, interest rates and wage rates will also influence housing demand. The type of housing demanded and the household size will also be influenced by these factors and consequently will vary considerably across different regions of the province.

Migration to British Columbia from other parts of Canada and from other countries plays an important role in the demand for housing. There is a fairly strong relationship between net migration and changes in housing, which represents the formation of new households in the province. As net migration weakened during the first half of the eighties, housing starts dropped sharply. The subsequent strong growth in net migration up to 1994 has been accompanied by increases in housing starts in most years. As migration slowed in 1995 and 1996, housing starts dropped to an annual level of 27,000 - 28,000 units from the peak of 42,800 in 1993.

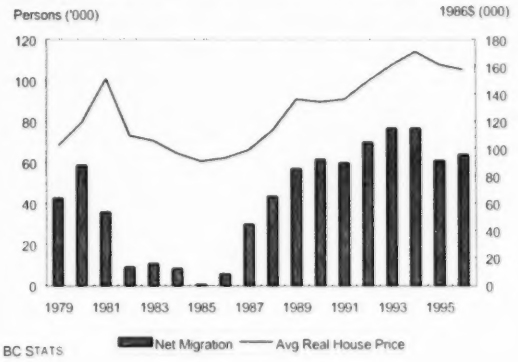
Household formation reflects changes in net migration



Other demographic factors which influence housing demand include the age structure of the population and the makeup of households and families. For example, increases in the number of separations and divorces could result in an increase in the formation of new households.

There are a variety of economic factors, which affect housing demand. When housing supply cannot keep pace with the demand for housing, the market compensates with price increases. From 1985 to 1994, the average real selling price of housing in B.C. rose steadily, apart from a levelling off in 1990 and 1991. However, in 1995 there was a drop of 5.5% in housing prices, as the demand for housing eased, and the vacant housing stock grew by 11%.

Housing prices are influenced by migration



The preceding chart illustrates the strong relationship between net migration and real housing prices. Since 1979 movements in housing prices have followed very closely the movements in net migration to the province. The 21% decline in net interprovincial and international migration in 1995 had a major impact on the demand for housing and housing prices fell back to their 1993 level. Although net migration increased by 5.3% in 1996 as a result of strong immigration to the province, real housing prices continued to decline. The large supply of vacant units in the previous year helped restrain housing prices and in 1996 the number of vacant

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units fell by 7.3%. With slower migration in 1997 as a result of lower net migration from other provinces, real housing prices have continued to decrease.

The size of households and the type of housing demanded varies considerably across different parts of the province. At the provincial level, the average of 2.6 people per household has not changed between the 1991 and 1996 Censuses. However, at the regional level there have been movements in both directions. The average size of households has increased over the five year period in both the Mainland/Southwest and Northeast development regions, while in other parts of the province it has decreased or remained stable. The increase from 2.6 to 2.7 persons per household in the Mainland/ Southwest is likely related to the strong growth in immigration experienced during the last few years.

There have also been shifts in the distribution of the type of housing between the 1991 and 1996 Censuses, as shown in the table below. At the provincial level, the share of single-detached housing fell from 58.6% in 1991 to 56.2% in 1996, while the share of all forms of multiple dwellings increased, with the relative increase being strongest for detached duplexes and row houses. Some of the shift from single houses to duplexes may reflect the addition of a secondary suite within a former single-detached house (or possibly an improvement in the identification of these types of dwellings in the 1996 Census).

Average Number of Persons per Household

Development Region	1991	1996
Vancouver Island/Coast	2.5	2.4
Mainland/Southwest	2.6	2.7
Thompson-Okanagan	2.5	2.5
Kootenay	2.5	2.5
Cariboo	2.9	2.8
North Coast	3.0	2.9
Nechako	3.0	2.9
Northeast	2.8	2.9
British Columbia	2.6	2.6

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 and 1996 Census of Canada.

Distribution of Housing by Structural Type

Structural Type	1991 British Columbia	1991 Mainland/ Southwest	1991 Vancouver Island/Coast	1996 British Columbia	1996 Mainland/ Southwest	1996 Vancouver Island/Coast
Single-detached house	58.6	51.7	64.3	56.2	47.8	63.5
Semi-detached house	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.8	2.3	3.5
Row house	5.2	6.0	4.3	6.0	7.1	4.9
Apartment, detached duplex	4.7	6.4	3.1	6.0	7.9	4.4
Apartment building, < 5 storeys	19.2	23.3	17.9	19.8	24.2	17.6
Apartment building, 5+ storeys	5.6	8.7	2.7	6.1	9.6	2.8
Other single attached house	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Movable dwelling	3.8	1.5	4.5	2.9	0.9	3.1

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 and 1996 Census of Canada.

The distribution of types of housing is dramatically different between the two most populated regions of the province - Mainland/Southwest and Vancouver Island/ Coast. In the former, in 1996 less than half of the households lived in single-detached houses and almost one quarter lived in apartments with less than 5 storeys. Between 1991 and 1996 the shifts from single to multiple dwellings were also quite pronounced. In the case of Vancouver Island/Coast, in 1996 almost two thirds of households lived in single houses and there was only a slight decrease from the 1991 share. There was little change in the proportion of households living in apartment buildings, but other types of multiple dwellings - duplexes, semi-detached and row houses - became more common.

Infoline

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/97	% change on one year ago
BC	3,943.9	1.9
Canada	30,377.8	1.1
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT		% change on
(BC - at market prices - $ millions)	1996	one year ago
Current Dollars	103,631	1.7
Constant (1986) Dollars	74,001	1.0
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Dec	2,794	-0.9
Merchandise Exports (raw) Dec	2,041	-6.5
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Dec	2,794	9.4
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1986=100)	Dec '97	one year ago
BC	139.2	0.4
Canada	137.8	0.7
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Jan '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,005	0.4
Employed - BC	1,818	-1.1
Unemployed - BC	187	16.7
		Jan '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	9.3	8.0
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.9	9.7
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Feb 18/98	Feb 19/97
Prime Business Rate	6.50	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.40	5.05
- 5 year	6.85	7.00
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Feb 18/98	Feb 19/97
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4348	1.3543
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6970	0.7384
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Nov '97	one year ago
BC	615.25	-0.2
Canada	601.83	1.5

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

New on our Internet site . . .

Our most frequently updated presentation of economic and social trends in the regions of the province is called *Quarterly Regional Statistics*. At over 250 pages it is a substantial document that should be of interest to those interested in the variability of local conditions and markets. This release is now available through the **subscriber section** of BC STATS' Internet site:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

Statistical Bulletins—subscribers only

While most areas of the site are freely accessible, this section, now containing all but one of our monthly and quarterly releases, is open to subscribers who pay $100 for a one year membership. This fee remains unchanged, even with the addition of Quarterly Regional Statistics. Provincial government access to the subscriber section is without charge - but you need to register with us. We will continue to print this release as some users are not yet able to access the Internet. However, we will have the ability to post updated files to the Internet as important data becomes available. Internet subscribers save $370 over the cost of a full subscription to paper copies.

If you wish to know more about this subscription service, try to access it. If you are not a current subscriber the system should politely usher you out and offer information about the contents and ordering instructions.

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Next week

- Earnings & Employment Trends, Nov. 1997
- Exports, December 1997

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